

CABINET	<i>Gloucestershire County Council</i>
27 March 2024	
Minutes	

MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Stephen Davies	- Cabinet Member for Children’s SafeGuarding and Early Years
Cllr Philip Robinson	- Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	- Leader of Council
Cllr Carole Allaway-Martin	- Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Commissioning
Cllr David Norman MBE	- Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries
Cllr Lynden Stowe	- Cabinet Member for Finance and Change
Cllr Stephan Fifield	- Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery

Apologies: Cllr David Gray and Cllr Dom Morris

1. Apologies

See above.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. Questions at Cabinet Meetings

7 Public Questions were received. Supplementary questions were asked on the following:

Question 1 – David Redgewell asked how the recently secured ZEBRA funding will support the required infrastructure such as, bus shelters.

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Cllr Philip Robinson confirmed that discussions were taking place between himself, GCC officers and Cheltenham Borough Council and this remained a priority for investment as part of the wider Interchange Hub programme.

Question 2 – David Redgewell asked whether there had been any discussions with the Directors of Public Health at GCC and Gloucester City Council around any potential clean air zone issues.

Cllr Philip Robinson confirmed that there had certainly been discussions in relation to the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Gloucester, as it was important within the ZEBRA bid to address AQMAs, but these had not gone as far as being able to quantify nitrous oxide reductions on specific routes.

Question 3 – David Redgewell asked whether legal agreements would be put in place to ensure the investment in zero emission vehicles remained a benefit for Gloucestershire and for example, the operator did not relocate the electric buses to other areas.

Cllr Philip Robinson confirmed that when funding arrangements were entered into with operators, these would reflect the necessary legal obligations.

Question 4 – David Redgewell, noting the installation of 16 Electric Vehicle chargers at the Bourton depot, asked whether this would include facilities for coaches visiting the area.

Cllr Philip Robinson reiterated the detail included in the written response and reconfirmed that there was currently no arrangement for coaches at this stage.

Question 5 – David Redgewell queried whether refreshments provision would be made available for coach services travelling out of hours and whether the bus network would be reconfigured to ensure it connected with the national coaches at Arle Court.

Cllr Philip Robinson emphasised that provision at Arle Court was in its infancy and would continue to develop. Officers would explore all options in terms of bringing together connections between national coaches and the local bus network. He recognised the issue raised around refreshment provisions and would pass the idea of a vending machine onto officers to explore.

Question 6 – David Redgewell asked what other bus priorities were being envisaged on this route.

Cllr Philip Robinson expected that there would be some provision along the A4019 which was associated with M5 Junction 10. He added that the bus service from Tewkesbury to Worcester was currently receiving little to no appetite from Worcestershire, but GCC officers were keen to continue to explore this.

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Question 7 – David Redgewell queried whether a date would be set for the Bus Passenger Forum to meet prior to 12 June 2024 submission to the Secretary of State for Transport.

Cllr Philip Robinson unfortunately confirmed that this would not be possible due to the incredibly short timescale and the amount of work that would need to be completed prior to that deadline. He recognised the importance of the Forum as part of the new Enhanced Partnership and hoped it would meet as soon as possible. He also confirmed that there will be further consultation with one of the passenger groups prior to the 12 June deadline but not a wider Forum as suggested.

13 Member Questions were received. Supplementary questions were asked on the following:

Question 9 – Cllr John Bloxsom queried why a ‘blanket approach’ was being taken to disclosing disposal information. He asked whether Cabinet could consider, wherever possible, sharing at least the identity of the asset in the public domain.

Cllr Lynden Stowe confirmed he would explore this suggestion with the legal department.

Question 10 – Cllr John Bloxsom asked how the public became informed of disposal decisions prior to the asset being put up for sale.

Cllr Lynden Stowe confirmed he would also explore this issue with the legal department.

Question 11 – Cllr John Bloxsom asked whether the Cabinet Member would consider pausing the disposal of Council Estate land at this time, considering a response was still being considered to the Rural Estate Task Group recommendations.

Cllr Lynden Stowe advised that there was sufficient time between identification of a disposal and disposal taking place, he was therefore comfortable to continue with the process but subject to the caveat of new additions from the Rural Estate not being disposed of until after the Task Group recommendations had been responded to.

Question 12 and 13 – Cllr Bloxsom, noting that tomorrow was the last day for Stroud Library operating at its current location, asked where the wider public consultation about future use of significant community assets was, as opposed to simply consideration of bids as referenced in the written response.

Cllr Lynden Stowe advised that the Council would always consider a genuine interest/offer from a community in regard to an asset up for disposal and would look to local members to raise these with Cabinet on behalf of their communities.

5. Performance and Risk Monitoring Report

- 5.1 Cllr Lynden Stowe reported on the Council's performance and risk during Quarter 3 of 2023/24.
- 5.2 He outlined that overall, there was a positively improving picture of performance, with 70% of corporate performance measures achieving target or within tolerance of target position (up from 58% during the first half of 2022/23). Good progress also continued against the majority of ambitions in the Council Strategy, with two-thirds of strategic priorities rated as on target, and actions being taken where there were risks to achievement. There clearly remained room for improvement however, and Cabinet colleagues would be in discussions with heads of service to move towards achieving 100% of priorities on target.
- 5.3 He specifically highlighted:
- Organisationally, the Council was building capacity and resilience with a positive reduction in staff turnover for five quarters, which members would recall was severely impacted after the Covid-19 lockdown. Sickness and absence had been at a healthy level for 12 months and almost 80% of staff had an up-to-date professional development review (PDR). There continued to be a higher reliance on agency and interim staff, particularly in certain sectors of our workforce.
 - Positive work to support the Council's climate agenda was underway with the order of a new fleet of electric vehicles for the parking enforcement team, 10 new fire appliances which were fitted with supplementary solar panels, and site designs completed to retrofit solar panels, batteries, and heat pumps to some GCC buildings, sites include libraries, fire stations and Gloucestershire archives. After some initial challenges, the Electric Vehicle charging point installation was also underway and would need to accelerate in pace over the next 12 months. The Council was ahead of target in delivering the structural maintenance programme to improve roads.
 - Referrals to our Employment and Skills hub now exceeded 1,500 since its launch and the 50/50 Challenge aimed to match employers with participants who are aged 50 or over for 50 hours of work experience to help develop confidence, identify transferrable skills. To date, 106 participants had signed up with 44 employers pledging placements which was a welcome and positive sign.
 - The Fire Service continued to address the priority areas within its transformation plan, with a particular focus on improving culture and diversity. For the third quarter its response timeliness to residents of Gloucestershire who had a dwelling fire had improved. There did however continue to be a challenge around recruiting qualified and experienced officers to carry out the more specialist and technical inspections/audits of business premises.
 - In Children's Social Care, the Council continued to operate in a challenging environment, having seen a rise in children subject to a protection plan for the third quarter, up 22%. On average however, more than half of Children's case audits had

been rated as Good or Outstanding for the last 12 months, and improvement efforts would continue.

- The Local SEND Area Inspection took place November and December 2023, and the Council had received and published the outcome of that inspection. The challenges it highlighted were ones that had already been identified and were already making progress in addressing. In particular, the need to continue to focus on improving the timeliness of EHCP plans. In addition, the Council was investing to alleviate some of that pressure by increasing special school placements through the opening of Sladewood School in October and a new special school in Abbeydale was also underway.

Having considered all the information, Cabinet

RESOLVED to

Note the report of the Council's performance and risks, identifying any areas of concern requiring further analysis, assurance or action.

6. Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) Funding Application

6.1 Cllr Philip Robinson sought Cabinet approval to move forward with the ZEBRA project, noting that the council's bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) for ZEBRA grant funding had been announced as 'entirely' successful four days after publication of this paper.

6.2 The bid had unlocked a total investment into electric buses and infrastructure of more than £20 million, including the Government funding, GCC contribution, a contribution from Forest of Dean District Council, and leveraging in substantial private sector investment. Gloucestershire operators involved in this programme were Stagecoach, Pulhams and Lydney Dial a Ride.

6.3 It would deliver 58 Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs) replacing older diesel buses and the benefits this created for Gloucestershire included:

- More than 20% of buses in Gloucestershire will be zero emission at the end of the scheme.
- Remove an estimated 30 tonnes of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, including in some of AQMAs and estimated over 59,000 tonnes of carbon emissions (over the estimated 17-year lifetime of the buses).
- Investment in electric bus charging infrastructure that provides capacity for further ZEBs.
- Help GCC to deliver on its ambition to make buses more attractive.
- Link to other priorities such as the development of a network of express-bus corridors and investment in rural public transport.

6.4 Cllr Robinson shared that the following routes would benefit from this bid:

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- Routes 94, 94x, and 99 (linking Gloucester and Cheltenham)
- Routes 41, 42, and 43 (linking Tewkesbury to Cheltenham)
- Route T (linking Bishop Cleeve and Tewkesbury)
- Route 71 (linking Tewkesbury to Gloucester)
- Routes 1, 2, P, Q, and L (Gloucester/Cheltenham internal)
- Route 801 (linking Moreton-in-Marsh to Cheltenham)
- Routes 802 and 855 (linking Bourton-on-the-Water to Cirencester)
- Route 777 (linking Lydney to Coleford). This route had also benefitted from a contribution from the Forest of Dean District Council.

6.5 He highlighted that there was a particular emphasis on rural or partly rural routes which was a DfT requirement of the bid. There were no negative impacts identified in the Equality Impact Assessment, noting some groups would particularly benefit from things such as improved accessibility, as well as the improved air quality and noise reduction.

6.6 The Leader paid his thanks to Cllr Robinson and his team who he recognised had done a huge amount of work on buses over the last couple years, striving to make a difference for residents and reflected that the 100% response to this bid from Government showed their confidence in Gloucestershire as a good place to invest because of this hard work.

Having considered all the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

1. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport to:
 - 1.1. enter into a funding agreement with the DfT for Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to accept the DfT ZEBRA grant and then add the DfT grant amount to GCC's capital programme;
 - 1.2. enter into funding agreements with:
 - a) Stagecoach West,
 - b) Oxford Bus Company (Pulman's parent company) and
 - c) Lydney Dial a Ride and Community Transport for GCC to award the ZEBRA capital grant funding together with GCC's own funding contribution for the purpose of contributing towards the cost difference between Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs) and standard conventional diesel bus equivalents as well as the capital expenditure incurred as a result of infrastructure purchase and installation.

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- 1.3. agree and implement a contracting arrangement with the Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC) to provide GCC with part funding for the Lydney Dial a Ride & Community Transport to purchase and operate a ZEB.
2. Approve GCC paying up to £1,500,000 in GCC grant funding by means of the three funding agreements described in Recommendation 1.2.

7. Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

- 7.1 Cllr Mark Hawthorne reported to Cabinet the proposed Action Plan in response to the recommendations of the Local Government Association's (LGA) recent Corporate Peer Review of Gloucestershire County Council.
- 7.2 Gloucestershire County Council invited the LGA to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge during November 2023. The feedback report was initially brought to Cabinet in January and contained much to be proud of. It recognised the talent and skill of councillors and officers, a strong commitment to delivering services that make a difference for local people. Given the significant financial challenges facing many councils at this time, it was particularly pleasing to note that the report also found that the overall financial position of the council was seen to be in a good place.
- 7.3 The report went on to make a number of recommendations as detail within the report. All of the recommendations had now been addressed in an action plan that has been developed by council officers with input from cabinet members, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, senior leaders, and officers across the council.
- 7.4 Summarising the five recommendations addressed within the action plan, Cllr Hawthorne reflected on the progress that had already been made.

Having considered all the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

Approve the action plan appended to the report in response to the recommendations arising from the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Review of Gloucestershire County Council.

8. M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme – Funding Update

- 8.1 Cllr Mark Hawthorne, on behalf of Cllr David Gray, updated Cabinet on the M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme Funding requirement and set out funding proposals in relation to delivery of the M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme, including how the council intended to secure contributions from development sites benefitting from the scheme.
- 8.2 The report also contained detail of the revisions that would be required in the future to the Highways Capital budget in relation to the scheme, up to the value of

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£334.2m, which was on the basis of £250m secured from HIF funding, £4m secured GCC funding and therefore noted the remaining gap of £81m in funding.

- 8.3 It was advised that the intention was to seek to raise those funds through Section 106 contributions from development sites benefiting from the scheme. He reminded members that a number of these development sites could only take place if this particular piece of infrastructure was upgraded and equally, it was important to remember that these sites were delivering specifically to the Joint Core Strategy for Cheltenham, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury.
- 8.4 He confirmed that the further funding would be required at the later stages of construction of the Scheme, during financial year 2027-2028. GCC had yet to commit to a construction contract for those works and a further executive decision would be required for this. Therefore, GCC were not exposed to financial risk associated with the funding gap as a result of the cabinet decision.

Having considered all the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

1. Acknowledge that revisions will be required in the future to the Highways Capital budget in relation to the scheme up to a value of £334.270 million, on the basis of £249.131 million secured HIF funding, £4 million secured GCC funding and notes the remaining gap of £81.139 million, in funding for the M5 J10 improvement scheme and confirms its intention to seek to raise those funds through section 106 contributions from developers.

2. Approve the principle of requesting Section 106 contributions toward the M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme from development sites benefiting from the scheme, with such contributions being sought under policy INF7 of the Joint Core Strategy ([Appendix 1 - JCS Adoption Version November 2017.pdf](#) (gloucester.gov.uk)) and/or any subsequent policy replacement.

3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Economy Environment & Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning and the Chief Finance Officer to negotiate and determine GCC's position with regard to the scope, mechanism and levels of contribution being sought from each development site under policy INF7 of the Joint Core Strategy and/or any subsequent policy replacement.

9. Arle Court Transport Hub Bus Service and Cafe Concessionary Contracts

- 9.1 Cllr Philip Robinson, on behalf of himself and Cllr David Gray, sought Cabinet approval to procure and award the following:

1. A seven-year contract for a high frequency bus service to serve the new Arle Court Transport Hub. The proposed contract shall operate for an initial period of seven years and include an option to extend its term for a further period of not more

than three years.

2. A ten-year concession contract, with up to a five-year extension to operate a café concession at the new Arle Court Transport Hub.

- 9.2 Cllr Robinson outlined that in May 2023, construction of the new £33m transport hub at the existing Arle Court Park and Ride site commenced, completion of the multi-storey and park and ride bus interchange was due in July 2024. An ambitious upgrade to the existing Arle Court Park and Ride site was included as part of the overall Homes England funded package for junction 10 improvements.
- 9.3 The full completion date for the overall Arle Court Transport Hub was November 2024. This included the redevelopment of the West Car Park (Phase 3), for drop off, campervan, long-stay, coach parking and full catering facilities completion.
- 9.4 The new hub opened-up journey opportunities from west of Cheltenham, providing a key link into coach operator networks as well as servicing the important Cheltenham to Gloucester corridor. A 20-minute frequency park and ride bus service was currently contracted with Stagecoach but this expired in November 2024, and therefore a replacement contract was required.
- 9.5 To encourage modal shift and for the Council to control fares, it was proposed the contract is let on a Revenue Guarantee basis and at an increased frequency of every 15 minutes. Revenue Guarantee meant that the operator's revenue was guaranteed by the Council through the contract price, but GCC kept the fare.
- 9.6 To ensure that high standards are maintained for users it was proposed to use the authority's existing Dynamic Purchasing System (which only used approved registered bus operators) and implement an Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme (AQPS) which would permit the Council to specify minimum standards such as vehicle age, minimum frequency and maximum fares covering both supported and commercial bus services.
- 9.7 It was estimated that the cost of the contract would be around £4.55m over a 7-year period and if GCC chose to exercise its 3-year extension option, this would total £6.5m over 10 years. Noting this was a considerable amount of public money, before the end of year two, there would be a review of passenger demand and service frequency to assess what the Council were receiving in income against that demand, and therefore determine the most affordable and efficient approach.
- 9.8 Many new facilities were included in the passenger hub of the new Arle Court multi-storey car park, including a waiting area, coach driver rest room facilities, public and fully accessible toilets, washing amenities and the accommodation for a café facility. The investment by a catering contractor was estimated to be over £100K capital. It was noted that attracting a suitable supplier and subsequent income stream might be challenging and extensive market testing and engagement with local and national providers was crucial in securing a supplier.

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- 9.9 The contract term proposed was up to fifteen years (i.e., 10 years plus a 5-year option to extend) subject to the appointed concessionaire meeting key performance indicators. Timescales meant that the concessionaire contract and fit out would enable the facility to be operational by November 2024.

Having considered all the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

Delegate authority to the Executive Director: Economy, Environment and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport to:

1. Conduct a competitive procurement process, via the current transport dynamic purchasing system in respect of a contract for the supply of a high frequency park and ride bus service between Arle Court Transport Hub and Cheltenham Town Centre. The proposed contract shall continue for an initial period of seven years and include an option to extend its term for a further period of not more than three years;
2. Award such contract to the preferred tenderer;
3. To undertake a review of passenger demand before the end of the initial two-year contract period to decide the most efficient frequency and identify the necessary funding during years three to ten; and,
4. Determine whether to exercise the option to extend the contract for a further period of not more three years on the expiry of the initial seven-year term.

And

Delegate authority to the Executive Director: Economy, Environment and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning to:

5. Conduct a competitive procurement process in respect of a concession contract to fit out and operate a café at the Arle Court Transport Hub. The proposed contract shall continue for an initial period of ten years and include an option to extend its term for a further period of not more than five years;
6. Award such contract to the preferred tenderer; and
7. Determine whether to exercise the option to extend the contract for a further period of not more five years on the expiry of the initial ten-year term.

10. Schedule of Proposed Disposals

- 10.1 Cllr Lynden Stowe sought approval for the proposed Schedule of Disposals in order to meet capital receipt targets.

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- 10.2 Prior to the discussion, members were advised that, should Cabinet wish to discuss the contents of the exempt information reported at Appendix A of the report, consideration would need to be given as to whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 10.3 Cabinet agreed to consider this item without having to refer to the exempt information.
- 10.4 Cllr Stowe outlined that Appendix A of the report contained units already identified as surplus to requirement and required re-confirmed agreement from Cabinet to remain on the disposals list. Appendix B was the new schedule of disposals for approval.
- 10.5 He emphasised that capital receipts generated from the disposal of property would be used towards financing of the current capital programme which was £43.059 million. Without those receipts, the cost of borrowing would go up and the council would incur additional revenue costs.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to

1. Approve those sites described in Appendix A (Exempt) which have previously been declared surplus by Cabinet in September 2023 and not yet disposed of, continue to be declared surplus to requirements.
2. Approve the sites listed on the proposed Schedule of Disposals Appendix B (Exempt) surplus to the Council's land and property requirements.
3. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Asset Management and Property Services to dispose of these sites in consultation with the Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for Finance and Change and Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director for Corporate Resources.

Leader of Council

Meeting concluded at 11:05